

SUCKED THROUGH LIFE

Twenty-Seventh Sunday

October 5, 1986

Readings: Hab 1:2-3; 2:2-4; 2Tim 1:6-8,13-14; Lk 17:5-10

INTRODUCTION: Have you ever noticed what happens when you go through a car wash? You drive to an appointed spot and read the instructions which usually read something like this: 1) Leave your motor running, 2) Do not touch the steering wheel, 3) Keep your foot off the break, 4) Make sure you are in neutral. The message conveyed is that if you sit there and do nothing then the big machine that looms before you will hook on to your car and - amidst a lot of soaping, spraying and blowing - suck you through to the other side and your car will emerge sparkling clean.

"For most of us", according to Fr. Rolheiser "that's just what a typical day does for us, it sucks us through. We now have radios within our alarm clocks which go off before the alarm actually wakes us. Hence, we are already stimulated before we fully awake."

"Then we rise to a radio to shower and dress and ready ourselves for work, stimulated by news, music commentary. Breakfast and the drive to work follow the same pattern. We listen to the radio, engage in conversation, plan our agenda, stimulated and preoccupied."

"We spend our day working, necessarily preoccupied, our minds on what we are doing. When we return home there is TV, conversation, activities and preoccupation of all kinds. Eventually, we go to bed, where perhaps we read or watch a bit more TV. Finally we fall to sleep."

"When, in all of this" asks Fr. Rolheiser, "did we take time to think, to be contemplative, to pray, to wonder, to appreciate, to simply enjoy, to be restful, to be grateful for love, for health, for God? The day just sucked us through."

Today let's try to answer this important question under the light of today's scripture readings and apply these answers to our daily life.

FALSE FANTASY

- The reason most of us allow ourselves to get sucked through life like we allow our cars to get sucked through a car wash is not because of "badness" says Fr. Rolheiser.
 - It's because of "business". It's because of "hurriedness".
 - "We are not, by choice or ideology, a culture set against solitude, interiority and prayer," says Fr. Rolheiser.
 - "We don't think contemplatively because we never quite get around to it."
- In our economy one of the fastest growing segments is the fast food take out sector.
 - People are no longer taking the time to eat together let alone praying together as they once did with the rosary.
 - It's not that eating together is such a big deal. What is important is the sharing of each others lives - the sharing of our deeper selves, the sharing of our pains and our pleasures.
 - Socrates once commented that "the unexamined life is not worth living." Fr. Rolheiser suspects that our age would counter with "the unlivable life is also not worth examining."
- By not being contemplative, by not praying, we rob ourselves of something we all crave - solitude.
 - How often have you heard people say "It's a rat race"; "It's a jungle out there" or "I think I'm suffering from burnout."?
 - Instead of changing and doing something about it most people just fantasize about frolicking on the beach in Tahiti, watching a

peaceful sunset at Puerto Vallarta or smoking a pipe in a rocker at a ski lodge in Colorado.

- Today's scripture reading tell us we don't have to be sucked through life nor do we need to escape to a false fantasy.

CHOOSE LIFE

- . In today's First reading we hear from the prophet Habakkuk who was, to say the least, having a bad day like you and I often experience.
 - The prophet was complaining, but if you read the entire book (it's only 5 pages long) you will discover that Habakkuk is not stuck in his complaints.
 - He works through his problems and becomes prayerful, contemplative and achieves serenity.
 - The closing words of the book (Hab 3:18-19) are "But I will rejoice in Yahweh, I will exalt in God my Savior. Yahweh my Lord is my strength, He makes my feet as light as a doe's, He sets my steps on the heights ..."
- . The Gospel invites us to hook into Christ but it doesn't work the same as hooking our cars into a car wash.
 - Hooking your car into a car wash may suck you through without any trouble so that your car emerges squeaky clean.
 - But you have to do more than hook into Christ. You can't just choose Christ as your personal Savior and sit there with your motor racing and your mind in neutral expecting Christ to suck you through life to eternity.
 - Life doesn't work like that. Christ doesn't work like that. We have all been given a free will and like it or not we are responsible for the choices we make in life. We have been given the freedom to choose and who we are is the result of our choices.

ONE HALF HOUR A DAY

- . What does all of this mean to us in October of 1986?
 - It means that maybe today is a good day to re-examine our priorities and decide whether or not we are living life to the fullest or are we just allowing ourselves to be sucked through life?
 - Yesterday was the Feast of Francis of Assisi, a man who found himself being sucked through life doing work he found unfulfilling, attending parties he found empty and associating with people he found to be hollow.
 - He turned his life around. He became prayerful. He became contemplative. And he discovered solitude.
- . Really this is what we are all searching for.
 - When a teenager says "School sucks" or "My job sucks" maybe what they are really saying is that they are just being sucked through the education process, the work process without being fulfilled.
 - Loud music and loud videos may give temporary relief but it will not provide the peace and solitude they need.
 - That will only come from the depths of a person, by coming to terms with who they are and what they are doing in life.
- . "Psychiatrist Eric Fromm was once asked to give a simple recipe for psychic health in a culture that is as pressured as ours" writes Fr. Rolheiser. "A half-hour of silence once a day, twice a day if you can afford the time. That will do marvels for your health" he answered.
 - "Fromm's answer wasn't intended to be a religious one. He was no Thomas Merton. But his answer might have come from Merton."
 - "Try prayer and silence. One half-hour a day. Twice a day, if you can afford the time. It will do marvels for your health."



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